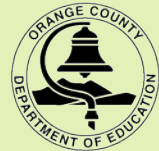


PAL® Quarterly



WILLIAM M. HABERMEHL
County Superintendent of Schools

PAL® PEER ASSISTANCE LEADERSHIP
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

February, 2010

Volume 3, Issue 2

OCDE PAL Staff

Elke Petras

PAL Program Manager

Deirdre Hill

PAL Consultant

Candice King

Administrative Assistant

The PAL Youth Connect Project

Beginning in 2003, the Orange County Department of Education has partnered with high school PAL programs in Orange County to implement Youth Connect, a project designed to build protective factors in freshmen as they transition to high school. This project is funded by the County of Orange Health Care Agency (HCA) - Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team (ADEPT), and supports the county's goal of reducing underage drinking and other drug use among youth.



The four high schools currently participating in the project include: Buena Park H.S. (FJUHSD), Century H.S. (SAUSD), Corona del Mar H.S. (NMUSD), and Trabuco Hills H.S. (SVUSD). The Youth Connect Project utilizes youth development principles by engaging PAL peer leaders in the project development, implementation, and evaluation.

The project strategies vary for each school, however all schools have adopted two main activities (Monthly Freshmen Class Visits and Media Literacy), because these activities have been found to be effective and well-received by students and teachers in prior years of this project. These activities have been highlighted on the next page.

SAVE the DATE

The 23rd Annual
PAL Recognition Event

May 27, 2010
Chapman University

More information will be sent to
schools in February, 2010, or visit
<http://pal.ocde.us>

Protective Factors

One of the most important developments in alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) prevention in recent years has been the increased focus on risk and protective factors. In brief, "risk factors" are any factors that may increase a student's likelihood of ATOD use; "protective factors" are those factors associated with the reduced potential of ATOD use. Research has shown that the more risk factors one experiences, the more likely one will experience ATOD use. However, research has also demonstrated that many young people have grown up in high-risk environments, yet emerge relatively free of ATOD use and related problems. Researchers have attributed this to the presence of protective factors in their lives.¹

¹ Hawkins et al. (1992.) "Risk and Protective Factors for Alcohol and Other Drug Problems in Adolescence and Early Adulthood Implications for Substance Abuse Prevention." *Psychological Bulletin*.

Peer Leader Feedback

Over one hundred PAL peer leaders from four high schools were involved in the Youth Connect (YC) Project during the 2008/2009 school year. Peer leaders were asked to respond to an anonymous survey regarding their experience in the Youth Connect Project. Results showed:

- 100% stated that the YC Project is a good addition to their PAL Program.
- 87% felt the YC Project is helping make their school a better place.
- 96% felt they learned new skills that are useful in life.
- 93% felt their participation in the YC Project has improved their leadership skills.

Upcoming PAL Advisor Trainings

Elementary PAL Advisor

February 16 & 17, 2010

Elementary Peer Conflict Mediation

March 2 & 3, 2010

Secondary Peer Conflict Mediation

June 2 & 3, 2010



Monthly Freshmen Class Visits

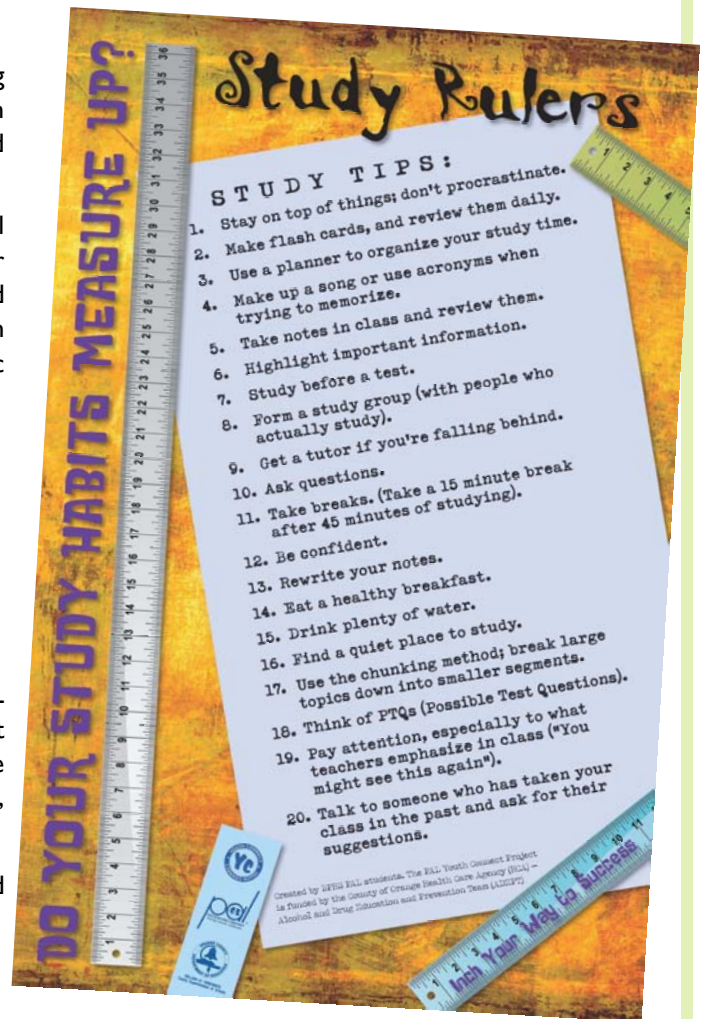
PAL students visit 9th grade classes on a monthly basis for a year-long freshmen transition program. Each visit focuses on a specific discussion topic, encourages participation in upcoming school events/activities, and includes a fun activity if time allows.

Freshmen English teachers are contacted at the beginning of the school year to see if they are willing to allow PAL peer leaders to talk to their students once a month for 10-15 minutes. Two peer leaders are assigned to each participating class for the entire school year in order to bond with the students in "their class." The entire PAL group plans the specific discussion topics, some of these include:

- Getting involved on campus, joining clubs, etc.
- Study tips, preparing for finals
- Community service
- Where to go for help for personal or academic issues
- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention

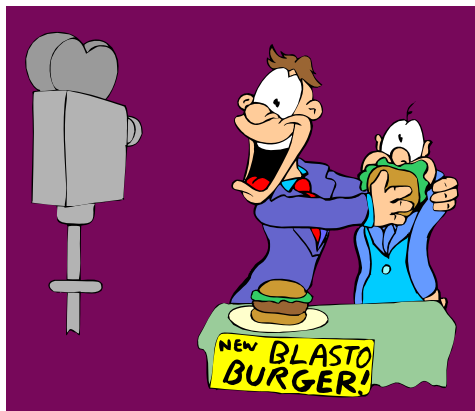
All discussions are designed to be interactive rather than a lecture. PAL students use prizes or games to communicate the information. To support the discussions, PAL peer leaders develop resource materials to provide to freshmen. Examples include: study tips poster, advice bookmark, community service opportunity brochure, and campus club list.

At the end of each year, freshmen are surveyed to evaluate the project and get feedback on how to improve the project the following year.



Media Literacy:

The ability to understand and interpret messages in the media



PAL students are trained to teach a cross-age lesson on media literacy. Media literacy is defined as understanding and interpreting messages in the media. PAL students use a PowerPoint presentation to discuss alcohol and tobacco marketing tactics: how advertisers use clever techniques to get the attention of the audience, how specific demographics are targeted differently and how alcohol and tobacco advertisements are often aimed at young people. PAL students then lead a group activity where students use the same strategies to develop their own advertisements. Following recent trainings, 96% of participants demonstrated an increase knowledge of media literacy.

If you would like more information about these activities, and how to replicate them with your school and/or with your PAL program, please contact Elke Petras, PAL Program Manager at 714-966-4458 or epetras@ocde.us.

- Do you want to start a PAL Program at your school?
- Would you like OCDE staff to present PAL to your school or district?
- Are you a PAL Advisor who is retiring this year?
- Need help to improve your program?
- Do you know of a former PAL student that we could feature in future issues of the newsletter?

Call OCDE PAL today! (714) 966-4358

PAL is a registered trademark of Worker's Assistance Program, Inc., and is used under license.

For more information contact:
PAL® Peer Assistance Leadership
Orange County Department of Education
200 Kalmus Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92628
(714) 966-4358
pal@ocde.us